

## Media Release

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### Employers Meet with Aboriginal Community to Solve Manitoba's Imminent Skills Shortage

Winnipeg - *Manitoba Workforce Connex*, an innovative and results-driven forum designed to address the province's pending skilled trades shortage, will be held today and Tuesday at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. For the first time, many employers will learn about their ability to develop and access Aboriginal talent through Aboriginal employment centres. This knowledge will help human resource professionals develop strategies to effectively recruit and retain the province's untapped Aboriginal workforce.

Manitoba's labour supply is expected to begin declining in 2011 due to a decrease in anticipated population growth. The issue will only intensify as projected growth in several sectors of the economy begins to take shape. Today Manitoba's economic players are in an ideal position to do the preliminary work necessary to ensure a skilled workforce is available to meet upcoming demands. *Workforce Connex* will provide employers, the Aboriginal community, training institutions and government with the ability to start the preliminary work that is necessary to ensure a skilled and local workforce is available to meet upcoming demands in the trades and apprenticeship sector.

"Canada is experiencing an Aboriginal baby boom," said Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC). "Aboriginal people are the nation's youngest and fastest growing human resource. This young upwardly mobile labour force wants and needs workplace opportunities for training, skills development and employment."

According to Statistics Canada's 2001 Census, the average median age of the Aboriginal population in Manitoba is 23.5, considerably lower than the average median age of the Canadian population at 38.8. From 1996 to 2001, the Canadian working age population grew by five per cent, while the Aboriginal labour force grew by 25 per cent.

"On a national scale, a disconnect exists between the potential skills contribution made by the Aboriginal workforce and the view held by some business and labour leaders on this contribution," said Lendsay. "Employers participating in Manitoba *Workforce Connex* are innovative thinkers motivated to develop an Aboriginal presence in their workforce and become an employer-of-choice for top Aboriginal talent."

*Workforce Connex* is a national forum series hosted by the Aboriginal Human Resource Council in cooperation with the Manitoba regional planning committee (Government of Manitoba, Government of Canada, Manitoba Hydro, Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development Inc., First Peoples Development Inc., Manitoba Métis Federation, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Manitoba Federation of Labour, Wuskwatim & Keeyask Training Consortium, Inter Provincial Association on Native Employment).

This forum is the eighth held in the series, with more scheduled for 2007/08. The outcomes of the forum will be integrated into a national private sector/Aboriginal partnership strategy. Funding for *Manitoba Workforce Connex* is provided through the Sector Council Program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the Manitoba Government, with support from Comstock, Manitoba Hydro and RBC Financial.

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